

## Never Be Afraid.

Never be afraid to speak for Jesus,  
Think how much a word can do;  
Never be afraid to own your Savior,  
He who loves and cares for you.

Never be afraid to work for Jesus  
In his vineyard day by day;  
Labor with a kind and willing spirit,  
He will all your toil repay.

Never be afraid to bear for Jesus  
Keen reproaches when they fall;  
Patiently endure your every trial;  
Jesus meekly bore them all.

Never be afraid to live for Jesus,  
If you on his care depend,  
Safely shall you pass through every trial;  
He will bring you to the end.

Never be afraid to die for Jesus,  
He the life, the truth, the way,  
Gently in his arms of love will bear you  
To the realms of endless day.—SEL.

## Easter, Its Observance and Design.

A sermon preached in the Brethren church at Auburn, Ill.,  
April 1, 1888, by A. M. Ridenour.  
Text, Luke 24: 34, "The Lord is risen indeed."

The Easter festival is the chief Christian festival, because it commemorates the resurrection of our Saviour, which was the crowning victory of His great work. In His resurrection from the grave centers all our hope of eternal life, for "If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."

As to the origin of this festival, no one can tell when it arose; it arose with the church, and the church with it. It is not simply chief festival, but the festival coming round in its full glory but once in the year, but yet appearing in some for in all the other holidays and constituting their sacredness. Every holiday, even every Sunday, was called, for this reason, *dies paschalis*.

The proper time for the celebration of Easter has occasioned no little controversy, and is involved in considerable obscurity. This festival always occurs on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox; hence, it is possible for it to occur as early as the 22nd of March, or as late as the 25th of April. This variation in the occurrence of Easter is the result of a change in the mode of reckoning time. We use the calendar month exclusively, while the Jews used the lunar month. For further information on this point, see Chamber's Encyclopedia, Vol. 3, page 744.

In the ancient church, the celebration of Easter lasted eight days, the towns were illuminated in the evening, and the beginning of the festival was a period for a general administration of baptism. Easter holidays did not conclude till the next Sunday, when those who had been baptized were led into the church in their baptismal garments. The practice of using eggs as an Easter rite is not confined to Christians; the Jews used eggs in the feast of the Passover. There can be little doubt that eggs at this season was originally symbolical of the revivification of nature—the springing forth of life in spring. From the Christian point of view, this "Feast of eggs" has been usually considered as emblematic of the resurrection and of a future life. Easter, with Christians, is specially designed to commemorate our Savior's victory over the grave, and His resurrection to eternal life.

This, in memory, carries us back to the garden, and we stand by the sepulchre, where Joseph of Arimathea has so tenderly placed the body of the Saviour; we see the great stone at the door, we see the seal of Jewish authority stamped upon it, we see the Roman guards watching the tomb, as if they would bid defiance to the power of Heaven. As the Jews are thus desecrating the great Passover Sabbath, behold, there is a convulsion of nature, and the angel of the Lord comes down from heaven and rolls back the stone from the door of the sepulchre and sits upon it. The soldiers tremble with fear, become weak and helpless and leave the sepulchre and flee into the city, and "show unto the chief priest all the things that were done." Now as the three Marys came to the sepulchre upon the first day of the week, behold, two heavenly messengers are first to testify of a risen Redeemer. They say: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen."

The same day he appeared to two of the disciples as they were walking together to a village called Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem, and "expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself, and as he took bread and blessed it and broke and gave to them they knew him, and he vanished out of their sight." Then the two disciples hastened back to Jerusalem and found the eleven gathered together, and said unto them, in the language of the text, "The Lord is risen indeed." And as they were talking, Jesus appeared unto them and said, "Peace be unto you." But they were frightened, for they thought it was a spirit, but Jesus said, "Handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

After eight days He appeared to the apostles again, and made himself known to Thomas, who was absent from the first meeting. He also showed himself to his disciples at the sea of Galilee and talked with them. Jesus not only showed himself to his disciples, but he was seen also by more than five hundred brethren at once, and last of all He was seen of Paul. That this testimony is true there can be no doubt in the minds of Christian people; but for the benefit of those who are inclined to doubt, we will now view the subject from a philosophical standpoint. This leads us to inquire, could his body have been taken away by human hands? If so, then it must have been done by either the friends or the foes of Jesus. Granting that His friends would have done it, the question arises, could they? They had shown their weakness by fleeing as soon as they saw Jesus arrested, and even Peter, who, on former occasions, had shown his boldness, now denies Him with a curse. That they should have undertaken the task of overcoming a strong guard of Roman soldiers is entirely incredible, besides, it is not claimed by either the soldiers or Jews that there was any attempt at violence. The seal could not be broken and the great stone rolled away without considerable noise, and to rob the tomb without this would be impossible. It is true there was a story set afloat by the enemies of Christ to the effect that "His disciples came by night and stole him away while we (the guards) slept." This Satanic lie carries its condemnation on its face.

The soldiers are to have been asleep, and yet to have seen thieves, and known that they were disciples. If the soldiers were asleep, they could not discover the thieves, nor would they have proclaimed their military crime; for Roman soldiers were put to death if they slept while on guard; that all the soldiers should be asleep under such circumstances is preposterous.

That the disciples removed the body of Christ is entirely without support. But that His enemies did it, is, if possible, still less credible; they understood the words of Jesus which he spoke in reference to his resurrection, hence they said to Pilate, "Sir, we remember what the deceiver said while he was yet alive. 'After three days I will rise again.'" For this reason they demanded a guard. Surely the Jews would not do the very thing which would spread the report, "He has risen."

And again, could they have produced the body they certainly would have done so, and thus silenced the claim of the disciples that "He has risen indeed." In view of these facts it seems that no honest, practical mind can accept a theory involving so many absurdities as that of either friends or foes of Christ robbing his tomb. Hence, we accept and submit to you, upon the authority of God's word, the fact that Christ rose from the grave by supernatural power. The triumph which Christ achieved by his resurrection from the dead is most glorious in its effect. First. It is a victory of light over darkness. Everything cheerful and pure and blessed is represented by light; the path of the just is light, and believers walk in the light. Light is an emblem of happiness and fitly represents the perpetual and infinite blessedness of the Divine Being. "God is light," is "clothed in light," and "dwells in light."

Christ is the "Sun of Righteousness," and as such He "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." And now the rays of this divine sun penetrates the heart benighted by sin—mantled in moral midnight, and dispels the mist

and fog that rises from the low grounds of depravity and makes the mind and heart all luminous with the light of God. Secondly, Christ's resurrection is a victory of grace over sin. Not only were we in darkness, but in ignorance and sin. "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." All the legal types and ceremonies pointed to and centered in the Christ, and ended at the cross, were "blotted out," and "nailed to the cross." "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Peter speaks of our not being redeemed with silver and gold. Corruptible things could not redeem us, but the precious blood of Christ did redeem us, and now we are under the dispensation of grace, "Justified through his grace." "By grace are ye saved."

Thirdly, Christ's resurrection is a victory of life over death. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." And again Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live." Once more hear Him as he addresses the Revelator on the Isle of Patmos, saying, "I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen. And have the keys of hell and death." Glorious thought—the last enemy conquered. For a while death swayed the scepter by claiming Christ as its victim by holding Him in its cold embrace, but the glorious morning comes, the Son of Man bursts asunder the bands of death and rises, a conqueror, from the grave. "Because I live," He shouts, "ye shall live also."

This is our hope of eternal life; that Christ has broken the power of darkness by passing through the "dark valley," and thus becoming "the first fruits of them that slept, by putting the last enemy under his feet. Then let us look to him this morning as our risen Saviour, Benefactor and Mediator, and may our desire for purity of heart and of life be an insatiable one, and may we realize that the vitalizing power of His Holy Spirit has been felt in our hearts, dispelling the gloom and darkness of carnality, and illuminating our pathway with the heavenly sunlight of divinity, which "shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

And at last, as we pass through the gate, may we shout triumphantly, "O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?"

We shall sleep, but not forever,  
There will be a glorious dawn;  
We shall meet to part, no never,  
On the resurrection morn."

## Not Afraid.

We are not afraid to go alone on a journey to a strange place where we are sure that a friend will meet us at the end of the journey. The husband in a distant city telegraphs to his wife to come to him, and he will be at the station to receive her. She has faith in him. She sits amid strangers in the cars all day. She enters the depot, filled with strangers, at night. But there is the one familiar face, and the loneliness that faith cheered during the journey, now ends in joyous fruition. But our blessed Saviour does not ask us to go far away in the Spirit world, with the assurance that he will meet us by-and-by. He comes down to the starting point of the strange journey. He takes us to himself the moment we enter the chariot of death. That terror of the unbelieving soul is the chariot-eer of Jesus for those who trust in him. So there is no loneliness in this trying hour. It is as when a bridegroom comes for his bride, takes her in his arms, as she leaves the threshold of her old home, and bears her to the new home that he has prepared for her. There is nothing sweeter in all the revelation of God's love than that promise of his presence which removes the loneliness of death.—Interior.

From the secrecy of the closet, from the sanctity of the home, from the gloom of the prison, from mammon and the roar of the busy mart, from the quiet of the sick-chamber, from the awe and solemnity of the death-bed, prayer may be offered—men may call unto God, and he will hear and answer them. Whenever and wheresoever the heart prompts, then and there we may pour out our soul to God. We have the sanction of our Savior's beautiful example for this.—Intelligencer.